

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine

Parent Information Sheet

NSW Health offers the vaccines recommended for adolescents by the National Health and Medical Research Council in a school vaccination program. Signed parental/guardian consent must be provided.

Your next steps

- Carefully read this information sheet.
- If you would like your child to be vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella, complete the Consent Form and give the signed Consent Form to your child to return to school.
- If you do NOT wish your child to be vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella, do NOT complete or return the Consent Form.

Q. What are measles, mumps and rubella?

Measles is a highly infectious virus causing fever, cough and a rash. Frequent complications include pneumonia, diarrhoea and middle ear infections. Brain inflammation occurs in about 1 in every 1,000 cases and 10-15% of these cases will die and many will have permanent brain damage.

Mumps is an infectious disease causing swollen neck glands and fever. Around 10% of infected people will develop inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningeal signs and symptoms) while 15-30% of males past puberty will develop inflammation of the testes (orchitis). Mumps infection during the first trimester may result in spontaneous abortion.

Rubella (German Measles) is an infectious viral disease causing rash, fever and swollen glands. It causes severe abnormalities in babies of infected pregnant women.

Up to 90% of infants infected during the first trimester of pregnancy will have a major congenital abnormality, including intellectual disability, deafness, blindness or heart defects.

Q. How are measles, mumps and rubella spread?

These viruses are spread by coughing and sneezing. Measles is one of the most easily spread of all human infections. Just being in the same room as someone with measles can result in infection.

Q. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by triggering the immune system to fight certain infections. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with these infections, their immune system is able to respond more effectively, preventing the disease developing or greatly reducing its severity.

Q. How effective is the vaccine?

MMR vaccine is very effective in providing protection against measles, mumps and rubella infection.

Q. Who should be vaccinated?

Two doses of measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR) are recommended for adolescents for complete immunity to measles, mumps and rubella unless they have previously received two doses of vaccine.

Q. Who should not be vaccinated?

MMR vaccine should not be given to people who:

- have had anaphylaxis following a previous dose of MMR vaccine
- have had anaphylaxis following any vaccine component (listed over the page)
- are pregnant (pregnancy should be avoided for 28 days after vaccination)
- have received a live vaccine in the past 4 weeks e.g. varicella (chickenpox), BCG (tuberculosis) or yellow fever
- have received a blood transfusion/immunoglobulin injection within the past year
- have impaired immunity
 - i.e. people with HIV/AIDS
 - people taking high-dose oral corticosteroids
 - people who are receiving high-dose systemic immunosuppressive treatment, general radiation or x-ray therapy
 - people suffering from malignant conditions of the reticuloendothelial system, including lymphoma, leukaemia and Hodgkin's disease.

Q. What additives does MMR vaccine contain?

The MMR vaccine contains lactose, neomycin, sorbitol and mannitol. Additives are included in very small amounts to either assist the vaccine to work or to act as a preservative.

Q. How safe are vaccines?

Vaccines used in Australia are safe and must pass strict safety testing before being approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). In addition, the TGA monitors the safety of vaccines once they are in use.

Q. What are the side effects of MMR vaccination?

MMR vaccine is safe, effective and well tolerated. Side effects are commonly mild and may involve feeling generally unwell, fever and/ or rash (not infectious and may occur 5-12 days after MMR vaccination). Serious side effects including anaphylaxis (see information below), transient lymphadenopathy (short-lived swelling of the lymph nodes), arthralgia (joint pain) and thrombocytopenia (increased potential for bruising and bleeding) are extremely rare. More information about side effects is available in the Consumer Medical Information (CMI) for the vaccine available from www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination. Parents concerned about side effects after vaccination should contact their GP who should also make a report to the local public health unit.

Q. What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction which may result in unconsciousness and death if not treated quickly. It occurs very rarely after any vaccination. The school immunisation nurses are fully trained in the treatment of anaphylaxis.

Q. Should the vaccine be given to a female student who is or thinks she may be pregnant?

No. Any female student who is or thinks she may be pregnant should not be vaccinated. On the day of the clinic the vaccination nurse will ask female students if they are or could be pregnant. If a student answers yes to this question, she will not be vaccinated. The student will be urged to immediately discuss the issue with her parent/ guardian and to seek medical help. She will also be provided with contact details for a health referral service that will provide advice, support and guidance.

Female students who have received MMR vaccine should not become pregnant for 28 days after vaccination.

Q. What if my child has asthma and takes cortisone or prednisone by a “puffer”?

MMR vaccine can be safely administered to someone who has asthma regardless of which medications they are taking.

Q. Who can consent to vaccination and can consent be withdrawn?

Only parents/guardians can consent to vaccination for students less than 18 years of age. Students aged 18 years and over may consent to their own vaccination and should complete and sign the Consent Form where ‘Parent/Guardian’ is indicated. Consent can be withdrawn at any time by providing the school with written notification of the withdrawal of consent or telephoning the school to withdraw consent.

Q. How can I access a record of the vaccinations?

Information about your child’s vaccinations will be uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child’s existing immunisation history.

Parents can request a copy of their child’s AIR Immunisation History Statement at any time up to their child being 14 years of age, and students aged 14 years and over can request their own immunisation history statement, as follows:

- using the Medicare online account through myGov my.gov.au/
- using the Medicare Express Plus App www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/expressplus-mobile-apps
- calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on 1800 653 809.

Q. What can I do if my child missed out on the vaccine at school because of illness or absence on the day of the nurses’ visit?

If vaccination has been missed at school, catch-up should occur as soon as possible. Parents should contact their local GP or pharmacist to arrange vaccination.

Q. What will happen to my child’s information?

The information you provide on the Consent Form is subject to strict confidentiality and privacy protections contained in NSW and Commonwealth legislation (see the enclosed Privacy Statement). The information will be entered into a NSW Health immunisation register and then uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child’s existing immunisation history and viewed on MyGov.

Q. Where can I find more information about school vaccination?

More information is available:

- by visiting the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination
- by contacting your local public health unit on 1300 066 055